

Luton Town Played Great Football

TEAM BECAME A MACHINE

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN 4
Parris, Ferguson (2),
Dawes (penalty)
BLACKBURN ROVERS 1
Guest

LUTON. — Dolman; King, Smith; Finlayson, Nelson, Fellowes; Ferguson, Dawes, Vinall, Roberts, Parris.

BLACKBURN. — Barron; Hough, Crook; Dickie, Pryde, Wightman; Bruton, Butt, Mortimer, Smeaton, Guest. Referee.—E. C. Carnwell, Lichfield.

We had conclusive proof on Saturday that Luton Town's victory at Southampton was no mere "flash in the pan."

After a rather anxious ten minutes during which Blackburn Rovers displayed brilliant conception of the game, Luton Town were masters fore and aft.

True, the Rovers never conceded superiority as far as effort went. We would have it that way, for it always makes for a keen and exhilarating struggle, but the Town, once they had taken the measure of the opposition, went about their task with supreme confidence and a team skill not produced in any previous encounter at Luton.

The result did not flatter the winners in the slightest degree.

Indeed, the Rovers were somewhat fortunate the reverse was not more severe, for several chances were missed—through over-eagerness in the first half, and when the game was safe because of a little disposition to play to the gallery.

The Rovers' game in the first ten minutes placed them on a very high pedestal. There was dash, pace and a great deal of craft in their movements; individual footwork was remarkably good, and there was an understanding between halves and forwards that boded ill for the Town defence had there been any slackness.

Much praise must go to the Town defenders for their part in the early minutes; their stubborn resistance had a lot more to do with the result than is apparent.

Had the Rovers scored during their period of excellence it might have made all the difference, but they had to battle on the retreat for long stretches afterwards.

EFFECT OF THE CHANGES

I do not think that the recent changes in the side have made all the difference, though there can be no doubt of the beneficial effect on the team.

Some followers are disposed to think that the change of wingers has revolutionised the play. To a great extent that is correct, but the whole team seems to have undergone a startling change in method, and where previously was a disposition to distrust the efficiency of colleagues, we saw on Saturday the fullest confidence.

The team became a machine working smoothly and in top gear; every cog doing his part, and the manner in which the ball was kept moving from player to player was a delightful revelation to the supporters.

Blackburn's defence had never previously given away four goals in a match, and during the first ten minutes did not look like conceding anything at all to Luton.

Later Barron, his backs and half-backs were desperately fighting to keep the score down, and the goalkeeper especially deserved credit for his splendid part.

LINESMAN'S FAULT

Moreover, but for the faulty use of the flag by one linesman the Town would have been dangerous many times more than was actually the case.

One had to admire the clever way in which the Rovers' defenders adopted the offside rule, but again and again Parris was flagged offside because he happened to be offside when he got the ball, this although he was well onside when the ball was last played.

Not every time was the linesman at error, but three times in succession in the first half he made this blunder, and the referee was taking offside instruction from the flag.

As for Referee Carnwell himself, if he made mistakes they could be excused. I had the impression that the game would have become unpleasant if he had not exercised firmness. One or two of the Rovers became rattled when out-manoeuvred and outpaced, and a referee who keeps control in such circumstances can be forgiven a few technical errors.

WAS IT A TRIP

Why he did not award a penalty kick when Dawes was brought down I do not know, because it appeared to me to be a flagrant trip, but evidently the official thought otherwise. That was a real escape for the Rovers.

When the penalty did come it was a clear case, and the Rovers could not argue about it at all. It was one of those instances of which many people think that a referee should be given discretion to award a goal, and it was a question whether the ball was not over the line when the full back fisted out.

THE DEFENCE

When one refers to team work Dolman must not be forgotten. He had not the amount of work that fell to Barron by any means, but made good saves, and in the first half, when he shot down to the feet of Smeaton a few yards from goal and snatched the ball away, he saved a certain goal by sheer courage and good judgment.

There was not much to choose between the backs. I still think both could afford to play close up to the opposing wingers. King's kicking was not all it might have been, but the greasy ball was very difficult to control, and there was one thing about King's work that could always be commended: he never delayed clearances.

Smith obviously enjoyed his game, and was as near his best as in any match this season. I have no objection to a back rushing up to help the attack if there is knowledge among his colleagues that he is to be covered, but this was not always so when Smith took an excursion from position.

The Rovers would not have scored had he been in position at the time, for his absence meant that Nelson was lured out of place and there was a gap in front of goal.

SOUND REAR

Still both backs did their part well, and Nelson's third back game was as good as it ever has been. I do not remember a single shot from Mortimer, so



well he was covered by the Town centre-half. Not only as a stopper Nelson shone; he had ideas when to go up for the ball and to drive it back to his forwards.

Finlayson and Fellowes were at their very best. One was not better than the other. Each did an immense amount of work, and the clever service to the forwards and participation in attack had a big part in the forcing of the issue.

FORWARDS

Ferguson does not shape like a winger in many ways, but I am content to see him there. He is always grafting, can keep position, and his experience and coolness enabled him to draw the opposing back out of position.

Parris, too, can hold the ball, and if he had shot as well as he centred he would have had at least a hat trick. There was neat combination between the left wing and Fellowes, and Roberts is undoubtedly playing as well as ever.

Vinall and Dawes did their part, too, and the inside men, although out of the scoring list apart from the penalty kick, provided their wingers with the right sort of openings.

SHOULD BE ALERT TO THIS

One thing more. Finlayson and Fellowes helped the forwards a great deal, and the inside forwards helped them a lot in return, but it would be a profitable thing if the inside forwards would race into position in readiness for the ball that frequently goes into an empty space when Vinall goes up to beat the centre-half with his head as he so often does in every match.

There will be many more goals if the inside wingers anticipate this move. At least half-a-dozen times Vinall managed to outwit the opposing pivot by neat headwork and the ball was inviting a Luton player, but there was none up.

These are suggestions rather than criticisms, and one can hand out praise lavishly to the whole team for a grand exhibition.

May they keep it up.

THE ROVERS

The Rovers, who played in scarlet shirts, instead of their blue and white, were no mean opponents. They roused enthusiasm by their skill in the early stages, but met a better side.

Barron, although apt to rush from goal, is a fine custodian, and Hough and

Crook played polished football at back.

The halves were clever in their use of the ball, and there were many sparkling moves between the flank halves that turned the point of attack, but they found the Town forwards too speedy and the quick passing, and variation of the methods all too much for them. They never knew when a sweeping cross was to be made or when a dribble was likely, and they were weary long before the end.

Bruton was rarely prominent, and the better wing was the left, where Guest was always a lively factor, and more so when he changed places with Smeaton. Guest appeared to be the one player likely to get a goal, and he did it when he had a real chance.

THE GOALS

PARRIS scored with a fine header from Ferguson's centre after ten minutes play. The game thereafter was fought at a great pace, with the Town gradually wearing down the opposition, and five minutes before the interval FERGUSON darted into the centre and netted from a corner kick by Parris which had beaten the defenders.

After the change of ends Luton pressed persistently, and Vinall, after a fine dribble, drove in a shot which Barron could only slightly divert, and FERGUSON rushed in and scored.

The Town defenders had relinquished their vigilance to some extent when GUEST scored for the Rovers, but very soon afterwards Parris beat the Rovers' defenders and shot as Barron rushed out; the ball was almost in goal when Crook fisted out, and from the penalty kick DAWES scored the fourth goal.